



Afternoon Alert - Friday, December 16, 2016

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HEADLINES

Noon news

All networks led with reports on the second day of the Japan-Russia summit to be held in Tokyo later today. Fuji TV said the agreement to be announced today states that the two governments "agreed to promote talks" on the joint economic activities, and "expressed their sincere commitment to resolving the issue of a peace treaty." According to the network, the document also "confirms that the commencement of the joint economic activities will be an important first step toward concluding a peace treaty." On the joint economic activities on the Northern Territories, the network said although "a special system" will be introduced, it is likely to be strongly influenced by Russian law. The network also said although Japan uses the names of the four islands, the Russian side calls them the "Southern Kuril" islands, adding that although the two nations agreed on the content of the agreement, they will not release it as a joint statement.

SECURITY

Osprey flights in Okinawa may resume next week

Asahi reported online that it has learned from a GOJ source that today the USFJ conveyed to the Japanese government its intention to resume operations of Futenma-based Ospreys next week or later. The GOJ has called on the U.S. to suspend Osprey flights in Japan until the safety of the aircraft is confirmed, and the U.S. military has explained that the incident occurred not because of a problem with the aircraft itself, but because of the damage sustained by its propeller during aerial refueling training. According to the source, the U.S. military plans to inspect all Ospreys deployed in

Futenma before it resumes their operations and to issue instructions to thoroughly confirm the safety in aerial refueling operations as a measure to prevent a similar incident from happening.

USFJ informs GOJ of its plan to return Osprey from Iejima to Futenma next week

Jiji Press reported this afternoon that the USFJ informed the GOJ that it will fly an Osprey that is currently at the Ie Jima Auxiliary Airfield to MCAS Futenma next week. According to Jiji, although the U.S. military decided to temporarily suspend Osprey flights following the recent incident off Nago, it is claiming that the aircraft needs to be transferred for maintenance and inspection. Jiji reported that after the Osprey is returned to Futenma, the U.S. military will continue to temporarily suspend Osprey flights. Jiji wrote, however, that flying the Osprey to Futenma before its safety is confirmed will definitely draw local opposition. Jiji said the U.S. military originally sounded out Japan about flying the Osprey on Dec. 16, but the Japanese side asked for reconsideration given that the safety confirmation is not sufficient to obtain public understanding. Jiji said the U.S. military then notified the GOJ that it will postpone the flight until next week. Jiji said the Japanese side is planning to accept the plan, quoting an unnamed GOJ official as saying: "With reluctance we have to accept it."

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Sonoura meets with A/S Russel

NHK reported this morning that State Minister for Foreign Affairs Sonoura visited Washington to meet with Assistant Secretary of State Russel on Thursday and expressed regret over the recent emergency landing by an MV-22 Osprey. Sonoura called for a thorough investigation into the cause of the accident and steps to prevent similar accidents from happening again. According to the network, Russel told Sonoura that the USG is taking the incident very seriously and investigating the cause and that it will ensure transparency in providing information to the GOJ .

The network reported that Sonoura also met with Republican Congressman Reed, who serves as the vice chair of the Trump transition team. Sonoura reportedly told Reed: "The U.S.-Japan alliance serves the interests of both nations. The presence of the U.S. military in Asia is extremely important." Reed reportedly responded by saying: "Exactly. The United States and Japan can forge a win-win relationship on the economic front as well."

Nago mayor calls for suspension of Futenma relocation plan

Most networks reported at noon that Nago Mayor Inamine met with State Minister of Defense Wakamiya in Nago today and handed him a letter of protest against the emergency landing of an MV-22 Osprey, calling for the immediate withdrawal of the plan to deploy Ospreys in Okinawa and the suspension of the plan to relocate the Futenma base to Henoko. According to the network, Inamine questioned the GOJ's use of the term "emergency landing" to describe the incident, saying: "The body of the aircraft was in pieces. Why are we calling it an 'emergency landing'? Wasn't it a 'crash'?" Wakamiya responded by saying: "If the airplane becomes uncontrollable and plummets, it is a crash. But I think efforts were made to minimize the damage, so in that sense, it was an emergency landing."

NHK also reported that the U.S. Navy announced that the incident was classified as a "Class A" mishap, the most serious type of incident involving aircraft, quoting a spokesperson for the U.S. Marines in Okinawa as telling the network that the total damage has amounted to USD 80 million at this point, and that the classification of the incident is based on the amount of damage.

Okinawa papers continue to focus on Osprey accident

Both Okinawa Times and Ryukyu Shimpo continued to report extensively on the Osprey accident, giving top play to Governor Onaga's meeting with Defense Minister Inada on Thursday, during which he demanded that the Ospreys be withdrawn from Okinawa. Referring to a recent belly landing by another Osprey at Futenma, the governor called the Osprey a "defective aircraft." The papers also highlighted State Minister of Defense Wakamiya's meeting with Vice Governor Ageda, with Ryukyu Shimpo saying that the GOJ official effectively rejected Okinawa's request by saying that the Osprey is indispensable for ensuring security in East Asia. The papers also highlighted Wakamiya's statement to Ageda that "it was lucky because it could have been a lot worse." Okinawa Times wrote that during his meeting with Wakamiya, Mayor Miyagi of Kunigami Village called for the postponement of a ceremony to mark the return of the Northern Training Area that is scheduled for Dec. 22, quoting him as expressing doubt over whether it is appropriate to hold a ceremony at this juncture in view of the Okinawan people's negative feelings about the Osprey.

The papers also wrote that the U.S. military has failed to respond to Japanese authorities' request to allow them participate in onsite investigations, with Okinawa Times claiming that the SOFA stands in the way of Japanese participation in investigating the cause of the accident.

Ryukyu Shimpo wrote in an editorial that Onaga's renewed call for the Osprey's withdrawal from Okinawa makes sense in view of the latest emergency landing and belly landing involving the aircraft. The paper also insisted that the NTA ceremony should be cancelled. An Okinawa Times editorial highlighted press remarks by Okinawa Area Coordinator Nicholson, in which he commended for deciding to land the aircraft in shallow waters to avoid injuring people. The paper also criticized Nicholson for failing to apologize.

- [Senior U.S. official backs Osprey pilot's crash-landing decision](#) (Jiji Press)
- [Yokota base-hosting communities call for prompt disclosure of information on Osprey accident](#) (Mainichi)
- [Governor Onaga asks DM Inada to remove Ospreys from Okinawa](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Cartoon: Abe and Osprey](#) (Asahi)

SOCIAL MEDIA

Some Twitter users sympathize with top Marine official in Okinawa

Not many new tweets have been posted since last night after Okinawa Area Coordinator Gen. Nicholson drew strong criticism for appearing not to be very apologetic about the Osprey accident in Wednesday's press conference. However, two tweets supporting his performance have drawn a lot of attention. One of them, which was retweeted almost 4,000 times, said: "Is Mr. Nicholson too arrogant to make an apology? These photos show him bowing deeply on two occasions this year over a sexual assault by a service member and a murder by a civilian base employee. He took full responsibility." The other one by former Sankei reporter Yamagiwa, which was retweeted over 1,600 times, said: "Mr. Nicholson disclosed that one of the crewmembers aboard the Osprey went to Kumamoto on an earthquake relief mission. The general also said it was appropriate for the pilot not to try to go to Futenma or Kadena and instead land in shallow water. It's fine for Japan to express regret over the incident, but isn't it more appropriate for us to offer prayers and be glad that the crew returned safely?"

INTERNATIONAL

Abe not first Japanese leader to visit Pearl Harbor

Asahi reported that U.S Navy documents and other materials show that then Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida visited Pearl Harbor on Sept. 12, 1951 to pay a courtesy call on Pacific Fleet Commander Arthur Radford. According to daily reports written by the admiral that were obtained from the Naval History Center in Washington, Radford met with the Japanese leader, who was on his way home from San Francisco after signing the Treaty of Peace with Japan. Radford's autobiography published in 1980 also detailed his meeting with Yoshida at his office at the Pacific Fleet Headquarters. While noting that these records shows that Abe will not be the first Japanese premier to visit Pearl Harbor, the daily said Yoshida apparently did not attend any formal events there and instead paid tribute to war victims at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific located nearby. Abe plans to visit the USS Arizona Memorial on Dec. 27.

- [Gist of Japan-Russia summit meeting, Dec. 15](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Full text of Abe's remarks to reporters after Japan-Russia summit on Dec. 15](#) (Nikkei)
- [U.S. sees Japan-Russia talks as important for regional stability](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan to have difficulty obtaining U.S., Europe approval of security ties with Russia](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Sovereignty issue looms as Japan, Russia weigh joint development](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)

- [Putin utilizes Japan for advancing Russia's global presence](#) (Mainichi)
- [What Taylor Anderson left](#) (Nikkei Evening edition)
- [Japan, Netherlands agree to agricultural cooperation](#) (Mainichi)

ECONOMY

- [LH, UH committees on agriculture adopt resolution calling for raising farmers' compensation rate to 90%](#) (Japan Agricultural News)
- [Rapid move toward Japan-EU EPA "agreement in principle" possible](#) (Japan Agricultural News)
- [Editorial: Casino law enactment deepens public distrust in politics](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Gov't compiles regulations to protect foreign interns' human rights](#) (Asahi Evening edition)
- [Handling 2011 accident costs will test TEPCO's ability to reform](#) (The Japan News)
- [JNFL suspected of having submitted false report](#) (Mainichi Evening edition)

POLITICS

- [Prime minister's schedule on Dec. 15](#) (Nikkei)
- [Editorial: Diet showing disturbing signs of being totally dysfunctional](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)

TV PROGRAMS

[Underground development causing risk of sinkholes](#)

NHK's "Close-up Gendai Plus" on Thursday reported on an incident near JR Hakata Station in Fukuoka last month in which a major street suddenly caved in. The program said experts had already pointed out the danger there, adding, however, that no measures were taken because there were many lifelines buried underneath. The program said underground development is posing a great risk, especially in urban areas, adding that there have been 3,300 similar cases across the nation.

